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Lebanese Investigate Report on Hostage

Special to The New York Times

BEIRUT, Lebanon, Oct. 4 — The Lebanese authorities began an investigation today to try to verify an assertion by the underground group Islamic Holy War that it had killed William Buckley, one of six Americans it said it was holding hostage.

The state radio said that although the police had little to go on, a full investigation had been ordered by senior Government officials.

By nightfall there was no sign of the body of Mr. Buckley, the 57-year-old political officer of the American Embassy in Beirut, who was kidnapped on March 16, 1984. Nor was there any other sign that he had been killed.

Two leading newspapers in West Beirut, *An Nahar* and *As Safir*, today carried identical statements in Arabic signed by Islamic Holy War. The statement was accompanied by a photograph of Mr. Buckley looking haggard.

Israeli Raid Is Cited

The statement said Mr. Buckley had been "executed" in retaliation for the Israeli air strike against the Palestine Liberation Organization headquarters outside Tunis on Tuesday. Sixty Palestinians and 12 Tunisians were reported killed in the bombing.

The statement said that the United States lent support to the attack and that "American warships in the Mediterranean provided fuel and information to the Israelis about Tunis."

The statements also asserted that Mr. Buckley was the Central Intelligence Agency's station chief in Beirut.

It was at first unclear whether the statements meant to say Mr. Buckley had been killed or was about to be. But later translations of the statements convinced many officials that the group was asserting that the American was dead.

No Independent Confirmation

A spokesman for the United States Embassy said it had not received independent information to confirm Mr. Buckley's death.

Islamic Holy War said it was placing the American's body "at the disposal" of the families of Palestinians and Tunisians killed in the Israeli raid. It did not explain what this meant, but the remark suggested that it had no intention now of disposing the hostage's remains.

Nor did it give any hint as to where Mr. Buckley may have been killed.

The diplomat, who was assigned to the embassy here in 1983, was the first American to be kidnapped in West Beirut. Five others are still missing: the Rev. Lawrence M. Jenco, a Roman Catholic priest; Terry A. Anderson, the chief Middle East correspondent for The Associated Press; Peter Kilburn, a librarian at the American University of Beirut; Thomas M. Sutherland, the university's dean of agriculture, and David P. Jacobsen, the director of the American University Hospital.

The statement said Islamic Holy War, often described as a group of Shiite extremists linked to Iran, had released a seventh hostage, the Rev. Benjamin Weir, to show its "good intentions" toward the American people.

After his release last month, the 61-year-old Mr. Weir, a Presbyterian minister, carried to the United States a message from the kidnappers demanding that the Reagan Administration press Kuwait to free 17 colleagues convicted in bomb attacks against the American and French Embassies in December 1983.

Last Sunday an anonymous caller who said he spoke for Islamic Holy War telephoned a Western news agency here and announced that the period given to the American Government was being extended but that time was running out for the hostages. He also said the American captives were to be produced at a news conference; it has not yet occurred.

The statement to *An Nahar* and *As Safir* today did not mention the group's promise to bring the hostages before the press.

Photo of Buckley

The two newspapers also published a Polaroid photograph of Mr. Buckley, but there was no indication of where or when the photo was taken. It showed Mr. Buckley, from Medford, Mass., looking pale and drawn with a gray beard. He was wearing a gray track suit with a yellow stripe across the chest. They appeared to be the same clothes he was wearing in a photograph issued by Islamic Holy War last May 16 along with those of three other American hostages.

In its statement today Islamic Holy

War said that it had brought the American diplomat to "trial" and that he was found guilty of having been an agent of the C.I.A. in the Middle East and station chief in Beirut. It said that he confessed and that documents were seized with him. The statement declared that the purported confessions and documents would be made public "in due course."

It charged that the Israeli raid on Tunisia was organized with the United States and held President Reagan personally responsible for whatever action his policy may provoke.

The statement said the raid was not aimed at Yasir Arafat, the chairman of the P.L.O., but at "Moslem Palestinians and Tunisians."

It added, "We warn the American Government and Israel that they will pay dearly in Lebanon, Washington and across the world" if they retaliate for the killing of Mr. Buckley. "The arm of our strugglers is long enough to reach the aggressors," it said.

'We Have No Word,' Reagan Says

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Oct. 4 — President Reagan said today that the United States had not confirmed reports from Beirut that Mr. Buckley's captors had killed him.

The President told reporters, "No, we have no word, no way to confirm" the reports.